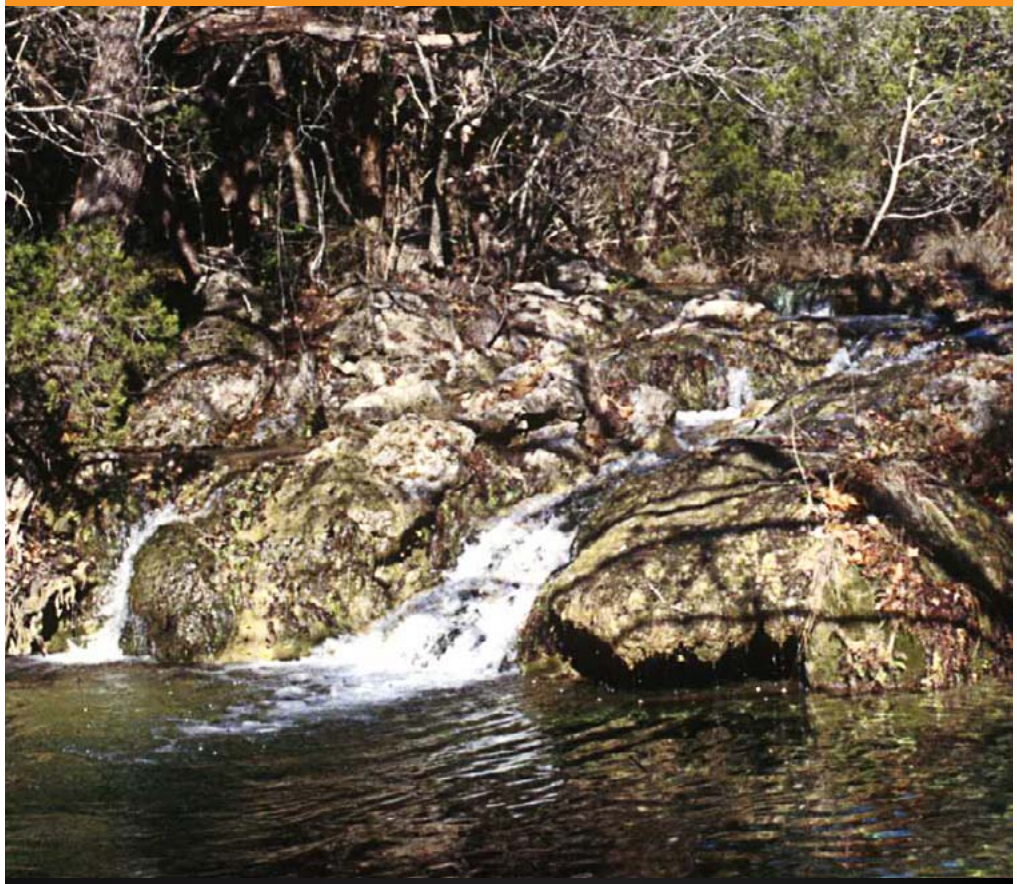
WILDFIRE READY AUSTIN

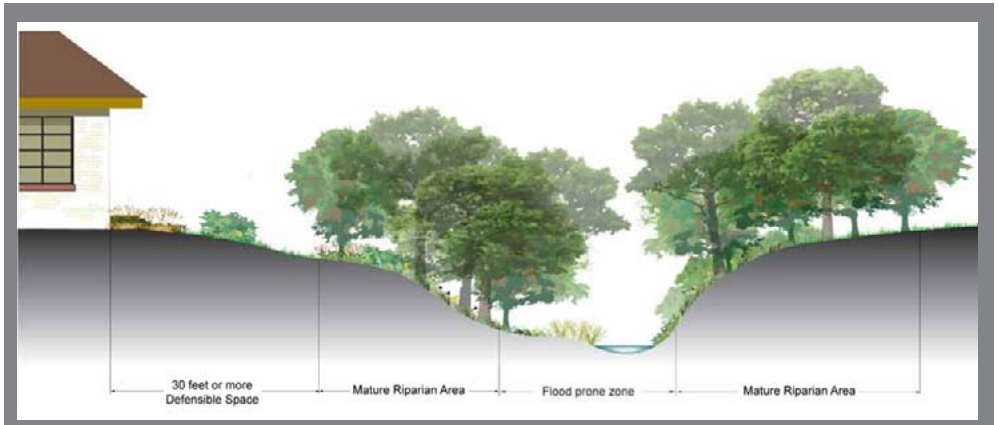
www.firewise.org
www.austinhsem.com
www.austintexas.gov/watershed/creekside

CITY OF AUSTIN
FOUNDED 1839

UNDERSTANDING the RISK of WILDFIRE NEAR AUSTIN'S CREEKS



It is understandable for homeowners who live near naturally-vegetated creeks and parks to raise concerns regarding the potential risk of wildfire. Despite the prominent occurrence of dramatic wildfires during the exceptional drought of 2011, wildfire incidents along Austin's creeks typically do not impact structures or personal property. Regardless of the proximity to natural areas, a homeowner's best defense against structure damage from a wildfire is to maintain defensible space immediately around the home and reduce the vulnerability of the structure itself as described in www.firewise.org and "Ready, Set, Go: Your Personal Wildland Fire Action Guide" *found at* www.austinhsem.com.



Natural areas are an important component of our urban environment. The grasses, shrubs and trees improve water quality, sequester carbon, support habitat for wildlife and provide many other environmental services. Additionally, natural areas can improve our mental health and connect us to the natural world in an otherwise highly urbanized area. To maximize these benefits, progressive land management often reduces mowing to allow creek buffers and other urban natural areas to develop into mature and diverse woodlands.

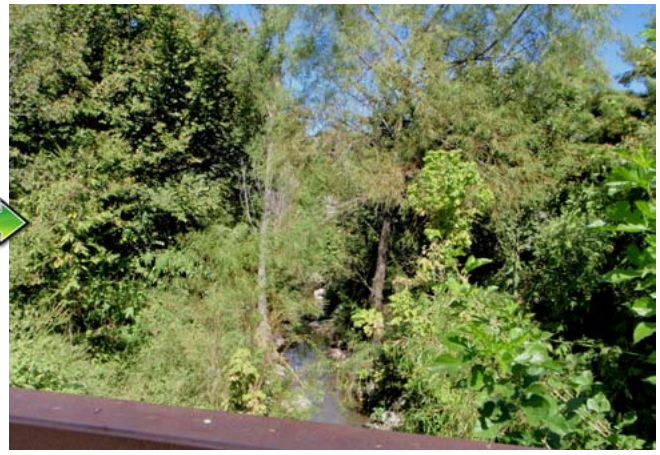
While all dry vegetation has the potential to burn, not all vegetated areas pose a wildfire threat to nearby homes.

Although it may seem counterintuitive, some woodlands – particularly riparian woodlands – often have a low ignition potential. This is because the lower grass fuel loads, higher soil moisture, higher humidity, lower temperatures, and lower wind speeds tend to inhibit the ignition and spread of fires. Management of natural areas that promotes establishment of riparian woodlands, coupled with the implementation of Firewise® strategies, serves the mutually beneficial long-term goals of increased environmental integrity and reduced threat of structure damage by wildfire.

It is important to remember that embers from a fire can travel long distances on the wind. Therefore, the best line of defense for protecting personal property is to follow Firewise® recommendations for your home that reduce likelihood that an ember may transfer fire to a roof, gutter or wooden structure.

1. Persistent mowing in creek
The chronic mowing of creek banks can reduce water quality, degrade habitat and increase erosion.

2. Grow Zone intermediate stage
Once mowing is halted, grasses, shrubs and saplings may grow tall as the area begins to recover.



3. Grow Zone mature riparian woodland
As mature trees close the canopy, the increased shade and humidity can reduce conditions favorable to wildfires.